

President Biden has made it known that he wants to create a “fair, orderly, and humane” immigration system. Well, he is failing on all fronts. I don’t need to tell anyone that the situation at the southern border, right now, is far from orderly, but it is also not humane. The President and other members of his party tend to convey an attitude that strong border security and the enforcement of our Nation’s immigration laws are somehow not compassionate or humane. Well, they are wrong. We are seeing the effects of the President’s anti-border security policies at our southern border right now, and the results are neither compassionate nor humane.

Encouraging individuals to make the oftentimes dangerous journey to our southern border in the hopes they will be able to slip across illegally is not humane. Encouraging families and, at times, unaccompanied children to expose themselves to the dangers of heat and the elements and human trafficking is not compassionate. At least 557 migrants died while attempting to cross the southern border during fiscal year 2021. That, too, was a record number. How many of them were encouraged to make the journey by the President’s lax border policies?

And I haven’t even mentioned the lack of compassion and humanity the President displays for Americans affected by the illegal immigration crisis. Straining the resources of U.S. border communities by smoothing the way for illegal immigration and cross-border criminal activity is not compassionate. Making it easier for cartels to flood our Nation with fentanyl is not humane.

The President of the United States—any President—has a special responsibility for our Nation’s security, and that includes securing our Nation’s border. So far, President Biden has spectacularly failed to meet that responsibility. This week, a caravan of thousands has reportedly started working its way north, through Mexico, aligning with the Summits of the Americas.

It is long past time for the President to get serious about the border crisis that he has created, and this summit could be an opportunity for him to finally take action. I hope that he will reverse his current course before his administration’s signature accomplishment ends up being a legacy of chaos at our southern border.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR PACT ACT OF 2021

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, every Senator here has a serious responsibility to make sure that our veterans get the support and help they are promised after their service to our country, and that includes making sure that those who have been harmed by toxic exposures during their service get the service and care they deserve. It seems pretty simple, but I hope we can hold up our end of the bargain today.

My dad was a World War II veteran—he was a Purple Heart recipient—and when he got really sick with multiple sclerosis, help from the VA made a huge difference for my family. So I want to really thank Senators TESTER and MORAN for their persistent work on this bill. I am glad we have come to a bipartisan agreement on the PACT Act because it does matter, it will help people, and it will save lives.

Right now, the reality is that too many veterans are living with chronic illness and respiratory diseases as a result of toxic exposures from their time serving our country in uniform. I have heard countless stories about the challenges they have faced struggling to get access to VA care and benefits they have earned, and that is unacceptable.

I believe very strongly that no one who put their life or health on the line for our Nation should face hurdles getting the care or medical treatment they need as a result of that sacrifice. When they signed up to serve, we told them we would have their backs long after their service, so if we are going to live up to our promise, then we need to pass comprehensive legislation to ensure all veterans have access to the VA services they deserve. Simply put, we need to pass this PACT Act.

With this bill, generations of toxic-exposed veterans would finally be able to get the high-quality care they need, and the VA will get the resources needed to process claims efficiently and better serve our veterans.

I remember, back when I was 22 years old, I interned at the Seattle veterans hospital. I have visited with and met with VA staff in every part of Washington State. The doctors, the nurses, and everyone else working at our VA medical centers really care about this work, they care about this Nation, and they care about their mission, but they need us here in Congress to care just as much and fight just as hard for their patients, our veterans. That is really what this bill is about.

When VA was considering closing or reducing services in Walla Walla, I fought back to make sure that our veterans in rural Washington were able to see a doctor without having to drive 2 hours or longer, sometimes through a lot of rain and snow.

About 1 in every 10 residents in Washington State is a veteran, and I am privileged enough to serve on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. It is my job to be a voice for Washington

State veterans who are in Seattle or Spokane or Walla Walla or anywhere, and that is a job I take seriously. That is why I have been continually pressing the VA Secretary to cut redtape and make sure the VA caregivers program works for everyone who needs it, the way we wrote it. It is why I introduced the Helping Heroes Act to get families and kids of disabled veterans the assistance they need. It is why I will keep doing everything in my power to hold the VA accountable for its really unacceptable rollout of the electronic health record system in Washington State.

There is a lot we need to do to really make sure the VA works for veterans, but passing the PACT Act, getting this done, is an important and meaningful process.

Washington State veterans deserve the very best the VA has to offer, and there should be absolutely nothing controversial about making sure all veterans across all generations who are suffering from chronic illness get the care they have earned.

I am glad to see we have bipartisan support for this bill. Let’s get it done and to the President’s desk.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today on behalf of 9 million Americans who directly benefited from very important health insurance credits in the American Rescue Plan—credits that are set to expire at the end of the year if Congress doesn’t act. I don’t believe enough attention has been focused on this issue.

Last year, in March of 2021, we came to this very Chamber and passed the American Rescue Plan, which provided a crucial lifeline for so many families. We eliminated health insurance premiums for low-wage workers making less than 150 percent of the Federal poverty level, expanded eligibility for health insurance tax credits to middle-class families, and guaranteed that health coverage would not cost more than 8.5 percent of a person’s income. The American Rescue Plan also increased the size of the tax credit for all eligible income brackets, putting more money in workers’ pockets.

As a result, ACA health insurance premiums were brought down by an average of \$50 per person per month, and people in both New Mexico and in Minnesota took great advantage of that. As a result, a record number of Americans—14.5 million Americans—are enrolled in the Affordable Care Act health insurance plans. That is 2.5 million more people who signed up in a

single year than ever before. In my home State, that translated to a record-low uninsured rate of just 4 percent. That means 96 percent of Minnesotans have health insurance, which is a great improvement over where it was.

Millions more Minnesotans and Americans now have the peace of mind that comes with affordable, quality health coverage. Eligible households in Minnesota have an annual average ACA tax credit of \$3,600. That is \$3,600 freed up for housing, gas, and groceries, while maintaining access to healthcare. But unless Congress acts to make the enhanced, family-friendly tax credits currently set to expire at the end of 2022 permanent, millions of Americans will have the rug pulled out from under them, likely seeing a double-digit hike on their health insurance premiums. Karen Tumulty, a columnist for the Washington Post, called it a “ticking time bomb.”

If these tax credits are not made permanent, 70,000 Minnesotans—or 61 percent of Minnesota families—purchasing health insurance on their own could see a 35- to 41-percent increase in their health insurance premiums, and over 10,000 Minnesotans could lose their health insurance tax credits in 2023 unless Congress acts.

In my State, Americans between the ages of 55 and 64 would be most affected, and you think about this with cost issues and inflation and all the things people are already facing. Right now, a 60-year-old Minnesota couple with a household income of \$75,000 is saving \$773 in monthly premiums. Taking away those tax credits would increase their annual health spending by at least \$9,000. That is like taking away multiple paychecks.

It is no wonder that Americans overwhelmingly support making these tax credits permanent. Doctors and patients have called on us to protect these historic gains in affordability, coverage, and equity. Families can't afford to go back to paying upwards of 20 percent or more of their monthly income toward healthcare premiums.

This is important for patients, and it is also important for providers. We know—hearing when we are back home—that many hospitals are stretched thin right now, and putting millions of Americans' healthcare in jeopardy is going to create a lot of volatility as patients are forced to disrupt their care and cancel procedures.

At a time when so many families are struggling to make ends meet, we just can't sit back and let those ACA tax credits expire. More Americans insured is good for patients, good for families, good for communities, and good for our country.

I would note one other thing I would do when it comes to healthcare, and that is making sure that we allow Medicare to negotiate prices under Medicare Part D for pharmaceuticals. While our communities are facing the potential of this—what the Washington

Post called a “ticking time bomb”—we also must act when it comes to pharmaceuticals because those prices are also going up.

I have just presented two really straightforward ways that we can help families with costs when it comes to healthcare. One is making sure we keep in place the tax credits that protect middle-class families in this country, and the second is to make sure we allow Medicare to negotiate better prices under Medicare Part D because when you look at what is happening right now, we continue to see major drugs—major drugs—go up, doubling, go up 200 percent, 300 percent, to the point where we are already paying double what they pay in Canada for a significant number of drugs. For Minnesota, that is right across the border.

We must allow, in my mind, reimportation of less expensive drugs, but the biggest game changer would be to lift the ban that the pharmaceutical companies got in place in law that says Medicare, representing tens of millions of seniors, is not allowed to negotiate cheaper prices. That is what the VA does, and it has been really good for our veterans. We should allow the same help for 46 million seniors. It will be good for all Americans because it will bring down the taxpayer expense in part of the payment of drugs, and it will be good for individual consumers. So let's get these two things done.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I just want to say I know many of us recognized your enormous service yesterday, and we really appreciate it and so much today, the day after your 50th birthday, appreciate the fact that you are presiding over this august body.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON GOMEZ NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Gomez nomination?

Ms. BALDWIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 219 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Baldwin	Brown	Casey
Bennet	Cantwell	Coons
Blumenthal	Cardin	Cortez Masto
Booker	Carper	Duckworth

Durbin
Feinstein
Gillibrand
Hassan
Heinrich
Hickenlooper
Hirono
Kaine
Kelly
King
Klobuchar
Leahy
Lujan

Manchin
Markey
Menendez
Merkley
Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla
Peters
Reed
Rosen
Sanders
Schatz

Shaheen
Sinema
Smith
Stabenow
Tester
Van Hollen
Warner
Warnock
Warren
Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—51

Barrasso
Blackburn
Blunt
Boozman
Braun
Burr
Capito
Cassidy
Collins
Cornyn
Cotton
Cramer
Crapo
Cruz
Daines
Ernst
Fischer

Graham
Grassley
Hagerty
Hawley
Hoeven
Hyde-Smith
Inhofe
Johnson
Kennedy
Lankford
Lee
Lummis
Marshall
McConnell
Moran
Murkowski
Paul

Portman
Risch
Romney
Rounds
Rubio
Sasse
Schumer
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Shelby
Sullivan
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Tuberville
Wicker
Young

The nomination was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The majority leader.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I enter a motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Nina Morrison, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

VOTE ON MORRISON NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Morrison nomination?

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. ROMNEY).

The result was announced—yeas 53, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 220 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Baldwin
Bennet
Blumenthal
Booker
Brown
Cantwell
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Collins
Coons
Cortez Masto
Duckworth
Durbin
Feinstein
Gillibrand

Graham
Hassan
Heinrich
Hickenlooper
Hirono
Kaine
Kelly
King
Klobuchar
Leahy
Lujan
Manchin
Markey
Menendez
Merkley
Murkowski

Murphy
Murray
Ossoff
Padilla
Peters
Reed
Rosen
Sanders
Schatz
Schumer
Shaheen
Sinema
Smith
Stabenow
Tester